THE OLD PUEBLO ARCHIVES.

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On a shelf in the vault of the City Hall of Los Angeles there stand three quaint old volumes, ragged, time-worn and brown with age. They are labeled "Angeles Archives, Vol. I, Vol. II, Vol. III," Their contents are written in provincial Spanish, or to describe the language more clearly, it might be called native Californian Spanish.

More than half a century has passed since the last line was written in these old volumes. The handwriting on some of the pages is faded and dim with age on others it stands out as bold and clear as the day it was written.

The books are rich in the autographs of the men who were making California history sixty or seventy years ago, when Dios y Libertad (God and liberty) was the motto, and the cactus-perched eagle the symbol of Mexican domination.

They abound, too, in wonderfully-constructed rubricas—those intricate flourishes of loops, circles and zigzag lines following each name, that in Spanish documents take the place of our English seal. Every man had one of his own, as distinct from his neighbor's as the brand on his cattle, and fully as necessary, for his signature was not legal without the rubrica.

These ribricas are wonders of the penman's art; and the mystery is how the writer could construct two alike, unless he kept a copy before him. Only among a people of illimitable patience in a land of poco tiempo would men go through life repeating such autographical monstrosities.

The subject matter of these old volumes is an olla-podrida—a mixture made up of the proceedings of the Ayuntamiento (Municipal Council,) election returns, applications for house lots and lands, the details of petty trials, treasury accounts, school reports, pronunciamentos, the story of a vigilance committee, and the skeletons of two or three defunct revolutions thrown into the stew. These old books contain, in brief, the story of the civic life of El Pueblo

and its sucessor. La Ciudad de Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles (the City of Our Lady of the Angels) under Mexican rule. Their contents are not indexed, nor are they arranged in chronological order in regard to the occurrence of the events narrated. There are breaks in the story of civic life as told by these old volumes—interregnums when apparently the drowsy old ciudad had taken a Rip Van Winkle sleep. Then, after the lapse of months—sometimes years—the story goes on as if there were no missing links in the chain of events—as if the city had awakened from a refreshing sleep and begun business just where it left off months or years before.

Mingled amid the dry details of what the "Most Illustrious Ayuntamiento" did, and interspersed between the grandiloquent speeches that the garrulous old Dons uttered, and the conscientious secretary recorded, we find the record of customs long since obsolete, and of usages and sociological conditions now unknown. We find in these old records some characteristics of the old-time Californian that are in contradiction to our preconceived opinions regarding him. We have been accustomed to regard him as a lover of pleasure, with nothing of the ascetic in his composition; giving his nights to dancing and sometimes his days, too. And yet, in these old records we find legal enactments against dancing that would fade the azure in the old blue laws of Connecticut. Proceedings of the Ayuntamiento; Ordinance Six (January 20, 1838:) "Every individual giving a dance at his house or at any other house, without first having obtained permission from the Alcalde will be fined $5 for the first offense, and for the second and third punished according to law."

Here is another of the blue laws of old Los Angeles that would have called forth approval from the grimmest old Puritan of New England in the days of Cotton Mather:

"Ordinance 5. All individuals serenading promiscuously around the street of the city at night without first having obtained permission from the Alcalde will be fined $1.50 for the first offense, $3 for the second offense, and for the third punished according to law."

What the penalty of "punished according to law" was. the ordinances do not define. These old lawgivers, however, had a way of making the penalty fit the individual. It is safe to say that any serenader who had suffered for a first and second offense without law, was not anxious to experience a "punishment according to law" for the third.

The "Weary Willies" of that day were compelled to tramp for their living very much as they do now. Ordinance No 4, (January 20. 1838.) "Every person not having any apparent occupation in this city, or its jurisdiction, is hereby ordered to look for work within three days, counting from the day this ordinance is published, if not complied with, he will be fined $2 for the first offense, $4 for the second offense. and will be given compulsory work for the third."

If he only kept looking for work, but was careful not to find it. it would seem from the reading of the ordinance, there could be no offense, and consequently no fines or compulsory work for the tramp.

The Ayuntamiento, or Municipal Council, which legislated not only for the city, but for the country from San Juan on the south to San Fernando on the north, was composed of a first alcalde, a second alcalde, six regidores (or aldermen,) and a legal adviser. The alcalde acted as mayor and president of the council, and police judge, the second alcalde taking his place when he was ill or absent. As the regidores, or councilmen, received no pay, and were liable to a fine of $3 for absence from meetings, the office was not sought after. Besides, when a man was elected to it, was next to impossible for him to resign. The tribulations of Regidor Pantoja well illustrate the difficulties of getting rid of an office in the good old days when the office sought the man. Francisco Pantoja was elected fourth regidor in the Ayuntamiento of 1837. In those days wild horses were very numerous ,and on account of their eating up the pasturage needed for the cattle, the rancheros slaughtered them. A large and strong corral was built, and a day set for a wild-horse drive. The band was driven into the corral, the best of the drove lassoed and taken out to be broken to the saddle, and the refuse slaughtered.

The Vejars petitioned the Ayuntamiento for permission to build a corral between the Cerritos and the Salinas, for the purpose of corralling wild horses for slaughter;and Tomas Talamantes made a similar request to build a corral on the Sierra San Pedro. When the corrals were built a time was appointed for a wild-horse rodeo. Pantoja, being something of a sport, petitioned his fellow-councilmen for a twenty days' leave of absence to join in a wild-horse chase. After many admonitions from his fellow-regidores to be careful not to get away with his neighbors' tame horses, he was granted a leave

of absence. A wild-horse chase was wild sport, and dangerous, too. Somebody was sure to get hurt, and Pantoja was one of the unfortunates.

"Of all the rides since the birth of Time,
Told in story or sung in rhyme,"

none, perhaps, surpassed in mad recklessness that of Pantoja and his fellow-caballeros at the wild-horse chase of the Cerritos. When his twenty-day leave of absence was up, Pantoja did not return to the halls of legislation, but instead, sent his resignation on the plea of illness.

In those days the office sought the man, not the man the office, and it might be added that when the office caught the right man it refused to let go of him without good cause (at least that was the case when there was no pay in the office.) The president of the Council refused to accept his resignation, and appointed a committee to hold an investigation on his physical condition. There were no physicians in Los Angeles then, so the committee took along Santiago McKinley, a canny Scotch merchant, who was reputed to have some knowledge of surgery. The committee and the improvised surgeon held an ante-mortem inquest on what remained of Pantoja. The committee reported to the council that he was a physical wreck; that he could neither mount a horse nor ride one when mounted. A native Californian who had reached such a state of physical dilapidation that he could not mount a horse might well be excused from legislaton. But there was danger of a precedent. The Council heard the report, pondered over it, smoked over it, and pondered again, then sent the resignation and the committee's report to the Governor. That functionary took it under advisement, and after studying over it for two or three months, accepted it. In the mean ime, Pantoja's term had expired by limitation and he had recovered from his fall.

Unlike Romeo, the old-time native Californian believed there was something in a name. He seemed to think there was a kind of talismanic influence in a holy name that protected the bearer from evil. Therefore, it was with no thought of irreverence or disrespect that he named a favorite son Jesus, or interpolated the name of the deity in his family surname. The old pueblo records abound in quaint and curious family names.

Juan de Dios Bravo, John Valiant of God, was a well-known character who figured in the early history of the pueblo. Although

John may have been "Valiant for God" in his youth, in his later years he seems to have fallen from grace. He kept a saloon, and the records show that on several occasions he was fined—probably for selling brandy on Sunday during "the hour set apart for prayer for souls in purgatory."

Another family name that appears in the old records, and that discounts in fiery zeal the Praise-God Barebones and Out-of-Much-Tribulation-into-the-Glory of God Mugglestones, of Cromwell's time, is the de Dios Padillas (Little Frying Pans of God,) Juan de Dios Padilla—John Little Frying Pan of God—was a prominent citizen of Los Angeles sixty or seventy years ago. One of the family taught school at San Antonio, and doubtless made it hot for the bad boys, José de la Cruz Linares—Joseph Flax Fields of the Cross—was the first grantee of the Rancho Los Nogales.

Money was always a very scarce article in the early days of Los Angeles. What little business was transacted was done by exchange of products. In the revolutionary days of the early 30's, when California had from two to three rival governors running around loose and stirring up revolutions, the capitalists of the old pueblo hoarded up the few pesos and reales that had been in circulation, and the financial stringency in 1837 became so great that the Alcalde reported to the Ayuntamiento that he was compelled to take country produce for fines. He had already received eight colts, six fanegas (about 9 bushels) of corn, and 35 hides. The Syndic immediately laid claim to the colts on his back salary. The Alcalde put in a preferred claim of his own, and besides he said "he had boarded the colts." After considerable discussion, the Alcalde was ordered to turn the colts over to the City Treasurer to be appraised and paid out on claims against the city. In the mean time it was found that two of the colts had run away and the remaining six had demonetized the corn received for fines, by eating it up—a contraction of the currency that exceeded in heinousness the "Crime of '73."

Sixty years ago Los Angeles had but recently put on city airs. The supreme government of Mexico had decreed it the capital of California—a territory in area larger than that possessed by the thirteen colonies at the beginning of the revolutionary war. It was then the only city on the Pacific Coast north of Cape St. Lucas, and was the largest town in either of the Californias. José Antonio Carillo estimated its population at 1500, and José Sepulveda stated in the Ayuntamiento that the city was experiencing a boom, or words

to that effect; and yet with all the city's importance it would have been hard to find a civilized community living in more primitive conditions than those which existed in the metropolis of California in the year of our Lord 1837. There was not within its jurisdiction a lawyer or a doctor nor a resident priest, or preacher of any kind. The schoolmaster was abroad, or if he was at home, he had taken a long vacation. The school had been closed for two years.

Money was almost unknown. Horses and cattle were the circulating medium of large denominations, and hides were the subsidiary coin or small change;corn had been demonetized by the crime of '37, and doubtless the calamity howlers of that day were bewailing the outrage. There was no hotel in the city, no schoolhouse and no public buildings except the church and the jail; no newspapers, no books and a mail but once a month.

How rapidly the wheels of progress have whirled in sixty years! How men's minds have broadened and their religious animosities softened. On the 17th of January, 1837, the members of the Ayuntamiento of Los Angeles, without a dissenting voice, promulgated this edict as part of their plan of government:

"Article 3., The Roman Catholic apostolic religion shall prevail throughout this jurisdiction; and any person professing publicly any other religion shall be prosecuted." The deeds of the old Dons who published that edict were better than their words. There is no record that they ever prosecuted any one for his belief or unbelief.

The old-time Regidores who legislated for the city in its earlier days may have been back numbers in many respcets, but in one thing at least they were far in advance of our up-to-date Councilmen of late years; and that was in a conscientious regard for the best interests of their constituents. When there was a deadlock in their Council, or when some question of great importance to the welfare of the public came before them, and they were divided as to what was best to do, or when some designing politician was attempting to sway their decision so as to obtain personal gain at the expense of the community, then the "public alarm," as it was called, was sounded ,the citizens assembled at the Council Hall, the president, "speaking in a loud voice," stated the question to the people. Every one had a chance to make a speech. Rivers of eloquence flowed; and when all who wished to speak had had their say, the question was decided by a show of hands, and all went home happy to think the country was saved and that they each and all, had had something to do in saving it. The clang of the bell or the roll of the drum that sounded the "public alarm" exorcised the malign influence of the political boss and thwarted the machinations of the scheming politician.